

To Begin Over – Its Catalytic Power

a Thomas Paine Institute essay

In all human history, there has never been a nation in which pure Capitalism was the constitutionally established social system, except in the human imagination.¹

The one exception was the newly formed United States of America, late in the 18th century. At that time, America made a grand start in that direction due to revolutionary founding documents that enshrined freedom. But it did not last. Loopholes and omissions in the constitution undercut freedom and led to its eventual demise.²

In hindsight, we see that America was two centuries early. The philosophy by which those constitutional deficiencies could have been avoided, Ayn Rand's Objectivism, did not appear until the middle of the 20th century. Unfortunately, now that we *do* have that philosophy, those who despise Capitalism are determined that never again shall it even come close to being realized, not in any country. How are they going to accomplish *that*?

Actually, they already have.

Capitalism's enemies have weaponized two ancient ideas to get the job done, ideas that started life early in human history and survived unchanged through the millennia. Eventually, philosophers and religious thinkers codified the ideas in two tenets.

The first tenet evolved from the ancient idea that human beings are innately weak and inclined to evil, often to the point of depravity. Even after the civilizing effect of organized societies, in which reason is seen as an alternative to physical coercion, humans have needed to face the ever-present threat of savage behavior from other humans. To Capitalism's enemies it is crystal clear that leaving human beings unregulated, free to pursue their own values as pure Capitalism would, is a recipe for disaster.

Likewise, the second tenet started life in prehistory, this time with the formation of social groups that provided the benefits of cooperation, division of labor, and social bonding. Although participating in a group is not inherently destructive, problems arose early on when groups began to be ruled by a higher authority, whether a tribal chief, king, priest, or god. Common to all these situations is the demand by the higher authority that individual interests and desires be surrendered to those of the group. This idea eventually became the tenet that self-sacrificial service to the needs of others, the *collective*, is the highest form of moral behavior. Capitalism's enemies use this tenet to illustrate that Capitalism is devoid of moral value. Why? Because it is a system of selfish profit seeking, where, in their view, business owners become immensely wealthy by controlling and exploiting their employees, often ruthlessly.³

These two tenets function as the two barrels of a powerful and versatile stealth weapon, hidden and rarely recognized, which effectively prevents the start of Capitalism in the first place or, failing that, eventually brings about its demise, as happened in America.

The Thomas Paine Institute (TPI) rejects both barrels of that weapon: the tenet of innate human depravity and that of the alleged virtue of self-sacrificial service to others. TPI invites you, instead, to consider the amazing productive potential that even partial implementation of Capitalism unleashes. Consider the evidence of the Asian Tigers in the South China Sea. They are not fully Capitalist systems by any measure. But by seriously implementing Capitalist elements, such as profit-seeking that is largely free from government intervention, they have become economic power houses—wonders of the world.

Now consider *full* freedom. TPI's new place, wherever it starts life, will be one of profound peace. It will be a socioeconomic system that has constitutionally banished initiated physical coercion, a system that enables all human interactions to take place through voluntary persuasion and trade by the free exercise of reason. It will be a system free of the evils of the world's dictatorships and mixed economies—a system free of the legalized plunder from endless public-private sector cronyism and pillaging from pressure group warfare.

Above all, it will be a system free from initiated force by government or the constant threat of it. In TPI's new beginning, in a new place, the only constitutionally established and, in fact, *required* function of government will be to protect its citizens from initiated force from any source and to bring retaliatory force against those who practice that evil or threaten to do so.

For the first time in history, Capitalism's champions will have the most compelling argument possible for pure free enterprise. For the first time, they will be able to point to a living embodiment of the *morality* of Capitalism, of self-interested profit-seeking, guided through and through by human reason—not by initiated coercion. For the first time, the world will have compelling proof of *pure* Capitalism's unbridled power to advance human flourishing to a degree never before imagined.⁴

The catalytic power of this place to inspire new beginnings in *other* places will be potentially unlimited—and unstoppable.

About the authors: this essay is a joint effort by the Thomas Paine Institute's Alex Bleier, Karen Cacy, Jerrold Meyer, and Kevin Osborne.

ENDNOTES

¹ See TPI's novel, *The Prometheus Frontier*, 2021, free at <https://thomaspaineinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/ThePrometheusFrontier.pdf>

² TPI's 2024 founding essay, *To Begin the World Over Again*, traces the tragic history of the demise, free at <https://thomaspaineinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/To-Begin-The-World-Over-Pamphlet-9-25-2024.pdf>

³ For a fuller treatment of the two tenets, including their exploitation by President and Mr. Obama, see chapter IV of TPI's *The Prometheus Connection*, 2014, free at <https://thomaspaineinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/V17-TPC-11-22-2024.pdf>

⁴ In the enormous library of free enterprise literature, George Reisman's monumental, *Capitalism*, is available free at: https://cdn.mises.org/Capitalism%20A%20Treatise%20on%20Economics_3.pdf.